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Tiny Universes: Series Artist Statement

by Barbara Ryan

It seems that in each new series of work I create, the subject becomes smaller than the last one and now it even verges on the microscopic. The *Tiny Universes* series, started in January 2009, began as a way to document the microscopic fibers that continually float inside my eyes. Commonly known as floaters, these harmless minute cells create shadows across the retina as they float inside the vitreous cavity of the eye appearing as webs, strands, clumps or spots. The floaters within my eyes are long fibers that I translate into the long lines in this series. They intrusively drift across my field of vision casting long overlapping shadows on my retina. Drawn in Japanese Sumi ink on various types of paper and in miniature books, these drawings employ the simple elements of line, value and scale recording the complex movement and weavings of each thread.



What floats



detail of *What floats*

Sumi Ink on Vellum (7"x8")

What Floats is a study of transparency; the lines are layered and float as if in outer space, lifeless and limp. The diaphanous vellum drawing is folded several times creating multiple layers of line, each twisting and turning towards its own destination. Installed directly to the wall with pins, the work responds to the movement of the viewer as it hovers over the surface of the wall.



Sliver

Sumi Ink on paper (2.5" x 14")

A study of value and scale, ***Sliver*** is a frieze of woven strands creating a complex network of intersections and negotiations that evokes a sensation of depth and dimension. Like a chaotic road map, ***Sliver*** points to the uncontrollable intersections of people and events that occur in our lives.

The ***Tiny Universes*** series is obsessive, meditative and a major departure from the super-realism of ***What Fell Through the Cracks***, my 2008 series depicting tiny man-made objects found in pockets and drawers, and other forgotten places. It documents the disposable nature of society by focusing on those objects we once found useful yet now are lost, forgotten and disregarded while venerating the simple beauty of each tiny article.



What Fell Through the Cracks (installation view)

Acrylic on Paper, Mounted in Glass Slides (3"x3" each)

Both series share a common sense of scale which has always been an integral part of my work. Generally my work is less than ten inches in any direction; this size presents a gentle invitation to a small space yet still confronts viewers with concepts larger than themselves.



Intrasections (two details)
Sumi Ink in Sketchbook (3"x4")

Intrasections is a 75-page, 3 inch by 4 inch bound sketchbook filled with lines that interconnect from page to page; each strand independently and *intradependently* exists within a microcosm contained between the bound covers. Each strand tells part of a larger story much like the random, specific, or fated events that occur with and without our awareness. The dichotomy in these Tiny Universes reminds the viewer that size and power are both relative; the seemingly endless tiny lines are evidence of the macrocosms that we all live in as well as the microcosms we are composed of.